1:Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1954 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

segments nested in the same way as lineage segments; and a segment could be referred to by the name of its original head. A residential segment was not associated with a particular locality in quite the same way as lineage segments often are among settled peoples, for even the State itself was not tied to any particular place. Within the area occupied by the State at any one time, the villages belonging to one major segment seem to have intermingled with those of another, for there were not any temporary boundaries defining major segment areas, even for those led by regional governors. But smaller segments, occupying single villages or less, may be said to have been associated with a particular locality at any one time.

Our concept of a lineage system would then require considerable stretching to include the Ngoni residential system. It seems preferable to employ the wide term 'continually segmenting systems' when speaking of this general class of system, and to distinguish within this category a number of different varieties. Lineage systems belong to one variety, the Ngoni residential system to another. These two varieties do not exhaust the category. The Nyakyusa system of continually bifurcating states appears to belong to a third variety, and there may be more.

There are other criteria which have been used to distinguish different varieties of lineage system, and which we may apply summarily to the Ngoni residential system. Despite the great importance of women in the system, it was clearly a patrilineal and not a matrilineal system. It was a graded system with a single head to each segment, like the Zulu and unlike the egalitarian Nuer. The system had a single apex, one highest segment embracing the whole society, like the Gusii and unlike the multi-capped society of the Tallensi. As a corollary of this it had sharp boundaries and did not form part of a chain of interlinked societies. There was little economic differentiation save in the control of cattle and there was, on the surface, complete cultural homogeneity imposed by the State.

The characteristic formation of rump segments is lacking in many lineage systems, but is found among the Zulu and in the Swazi lineage,[41] and perhaps more widely, although in both these societies the process does not seem to have been as greatly developed as among the Ngoni. Among the Zulu and Swazi it led to a series of homesteads or villages corresponding to successive holders of the office of lineage head or king. Among the Ngoni not only was each

[41] cf. Holleman, 'Twee-eenheidsbeginsel van die Zulu' and 'Zulu *isigodi*'; Bryant, *Dictionary*, pp. 729*f*, s.v. *isizinda*; and Kuper, *African Aristocracy*, pp. 49*f*.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

In the 1930's, in the villages of the *alumuzana*, individuals with the same clan name formed patrilineal groups of an extended family type. The original *alumuzana* were the leaders of groups of persons bearing their clan descent name, who crossed the Zambesi under Zwangendaba or Mputa. In Part II we shall see how these *alumuzana* were settled in the Ngoni kingdoms round the royal villages, with the result that a group of villages of mixed ethnic origin came to be associated with the village regarded as the head village of a clan. Reference is made from time to time in this study to clan heads, and to the head villages of certain clans. There was no head of a Swazi or trans-Zambesi clan who was not regarded as a *mulumuzana*. On the ground that his ancestor crossed the Zambesi with his wives and followers, the head of such a clan was always given that title. In addition to the head village of a *mulumuzana* there were a number of other villages connected with the clan, created partly by the working of the *lusungulu* system of village segmentation, and partly by other sections of the larger villages moving off to make new gardens. The association of a number of villages owned by individuals with the same descent name was due to the original settlement of the *alumuzana* who were given land at varying distances from the royal village. When the Ngoni spoke of 'clan areas' this was the connotation they gave to the term. Village censuses showed that small family groups bearing the same descent name were scattered widely over a number of villages in several of the chiefs' areas. There was, however, in connexion with each clan an area of concentration round the head village where a number of families and individuals with that descent name were living. These were sometimes referred to as clan areas, using the name of the clan with the prefix *ma*, meaning the people of that clan, in central Ngoniland, and with the prefix *u*, meaning the land of the clan, in the northern kingdom.

(*c*) *The ritual pattern*

In the rest of this study there will be descriptions and analyses of Ngoni marriage and funeral rites, of the puberty rites carried out for each boy and girl, but not in groups in initiation schools, and of the rituals associated with the ownership of cattle and with the ancestor cult. The marriage and funeral rites have South-eastern Bantu affinities, and so has the ritual associated with cattle-keeping and the ancestor cult. The northern Ngoni had a tradition that circumcision was practised among them when they left Natal, and that it was given up while they were in Tanganyika. Giving the head-ring (*cidlodlo*) to the men who were allowed to leave the regiments and settle as married men in civilian life was another ritual of southern origin which the Ngoni gave up soon after the kingdoms were established in Nyasaland.[1] The

[1] The early Europeans in Nyasaland reported that head-rings were worn by all the senior Ngoni men.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

national ritual of the first-fruits ceremony (*incwala*), which brought all the people to the royal village, was also abandoned before the Ngoni kingdoms were finally established, for no old person alive in the 1930's had seen the *incwala* ceremony.

(*d*) *The ceremonial pattern*

Ngoni songs and dances were performed without the accompaniment of drums and the words of the songs sung in the 1930's were in the Ngoni language. The war-dance, *ligubo*, was still danced at the royal village and at the funerals of Paramounts and Royal Sisters. The *ngoma* dance, performed after the harvest by young men and girls, was encouraged by the two Ngoni Paramounts, who endeavoured to prohibit other dances which were not of Ngoni origin.

Ceremonial dress, especially the war-dress of the men, was well preserved by heads of clans in the 1930's in the central Ngoni kingdom. In both kingdoms the Ngoni leading women wore their traditional bead ornaments on the head and neck and arms, and tied their cloths on festive occasions in the way in which their ancestors wore the long lengths of soft dressed leather.

Only in Ngoni families were to be found the making of milk curds (*amasi*), the cooked blood (*ulubende*), and the stamped maize (*izinkobe*), all of which were traditional foods brought by them from the south.

(*e*) *The linguistic pattern*

In the 1930's the Ngoni language had almost disappeared as a home language, except in Chief Mperembe's area in the northern kingdom. The majority of the older men could still speak and understand Ngoni, and nearly all the men who had been away to work in Southern Rhodesia or the Transvaal had renewed their knowledge of Ngoni or learnt to understand it from working with men who spoke Ndebele, Zulu or Swazi. The texts in this book from the northern kingdom were given in the Ngoni language and translated for me by Y. M. Cibambo. His own texts were written for me in English. The texts from the central kingdom were given in Nyanja and translated by me. The vernacular terms used in this book illustrate the continued use of Ngoni terms for traditional offices and objects, though in the central kingdom many of these were being replaced by Nyanja terms. Words of traditional songs, some ritual formulae, some forms of address, some titles of senior persons or groups —all these were in Ngoni. The younger generation, however, especially if they had not been south and heard Zulu or Ndebele, were not able to make any of the clicks, or to pronounce such double consonants as *dl* and *hl*.

The Ngoni were punctilious about etiquette, and especially about the linguistic terms required by good manners for greeting persons of different rank and seniority, thanking for gifts or for an audience, taking

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

your people as did your father before you. If a man be at fault, forgive him; but the sin of adultery cannot be pardoned.'

Habuya Dube, the official 'praiser' of Paramount Gomani II, had been present at the funeral of Cikusi, and he confirmed that the ceremony of accession was as described above and added these further details:

'At the time of the burning of the body of Cikusi, Gomani stood up in the smoke, standing on one leg with a shield in his hand. When all had been consumed by the fire, they began to open the waters and the grave-digger swept the ashes. And they picked up Gomani and went with him to the mound so that he should wash. When these things were over, we left the water to go to the house. We were dancing *ligubo* in the open place and Gomani had a headdress of *luve* [1] feathers on his head. And they followed him into the house, but all the people were dancing *ligubo* in the *bwalo* for a whole month. When the mourning was over, Bvumbwe Maseko said "Now let us establish (*tiimike*) our chief." So he was established.

The 'standing on one leg' referred to in both texts is the position adopted by other East and South-east African people when resting supported by the spear, with one foot flat against the other knee and the shield in front of the body. Other men inheriting their father's position stood at the grave holding a spear, but only those of the Maseko clan, succeeding the Paramount in the direct line, adopted the position of standing on one leg. 'Placing' or establishing the Paramount was done before a large gathering of people with the warriors in full war-dress, described graphically in terms of the waving head-plumes and the thunder of the shields. It was evident that all discussion of who would or would not be a suitable Paramount went on within the closed circle of the regent and the senior men, and the people were presented with the chosen Paramount whom they acclaimed.

The instruction by the senior men was a reminder to the new Paramount that, though his new powers were extensive and unique in their authority, he should not act like a cruel despot. There are references in the *Ncheu District Note Book* [2] to the passing-over of an elder brother of Gomani I on the grounds that he was of a fierce and cruel disposition, though, according to Ngoni informants, this man Mandala was a younger brother of Cikusi and an uncle of Gomani, and thus was not eligible to be Paramount. In discussing the type of man who was considered suitable to be Paramount, Ngoni informants always laid stress on the need for him not to be fierce and cruel. This pointed to an ideal type of Paramount and did not agree with European accounts of large-scale poison ordeals at Cikusi's court. The instruction to the new Paramount

[1] Feathers worn only by the Paramount. [2] *Ncheu District Note Book*. 1891.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

182 585 621 The prolonged series of interviews, exchanges and ceremonies emphasized the Ngoni conception of the marriage contract and its binding nature. They also underlined the severance of the new wife from her former family and house, and her gradual assimilation into her mother-in-law's house. This relationship between Ngoni women within the houses provided an effective means of integrating them into a village to which they were strangers.

CHAPTER IV

NGONI FAMILY STRUCTURE

● 183 59 'The Ngoni have power and authority over their women and their children.' So began one of the texts on *cingoni*, 'the thing that is Ngoni', by a man of the Ntumba people whose grandfather had been born among the Ngoni when they were in Songea. There was a recognised ideal pattern of an Ngoni family which covered both the individuals included in the family group and the place where they lived. This pattern was patrilineal in descent, virilocal in residence, polygynous in marriage for all men of standing who were not Christians. Other recognised and often-mentioned characteristics were the continued residence of widows in their husband's village after his death, the grouping of families by houses, and the *laweni*, or dormitory system for boys and unmarried young men.

581 593 The young wife wept on the day of her marriage because she was leaving the security and known relationships of her own family for the hazards and uncertainty of entering as a stranger into her husband's family group. The dramatization of these sentiments in the protracted marriage ceremony, and the allusions in the *mtimba* songs, brought out clearly the continuity of the man's relations with all members of his family and the sudden sharp break in the woman's relationship when she married. When her first child was born, and a new individual family group launched, her final integration into her husband's family began. As a mother who had borne a grandchild to her husband's parents she had thenceforward a direct part in the relationships within her husband's family, but as a wife she was always a stranger. The marriage negotiations and ceremonial express the closeness of the family ties, showing on the girl's side the anxiety of her family on parting with her to live among strangers; and on the man's side the hesitancy of the husband's family at taking into their midst an unknown and untried stranger. In addition, the protracted exchanges of cattle and feasts, delaying the final ceremony and building up relationships between the two family groups, illustrate the Ngoni attitude towards marriage as a

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

away the prize animals in the herd. Their formula in presenting a beast was 'Here is a small sheep.' This belittling of a gift was the social counterpart of their inner desire for a reputation for generosity.

It has been clear from many previous references that mutual assistance among members of a house was inherent in the social pattern of cattle-ownership. The Ngoni attached great value to this reciprocity of service, and it was deeply embedded in their social ethic. Young men in Ngoni villages thought twice before they deliberately took action which would bring them into the courts, because the fine would have to be paid by their elders from the common herd of cattle. The implications of this service proved no ultimate deterrent to hot-headed youth, but the lesson was constantly being rubbed in. After a court case for adultery, when a young man's father and his father's brothers had handed over a beast for a fine, they would grumble in the evening by the kraal at this waste of good cattle, and suggest it was time the young man went off to the south and sent money home to buy more cattle. This was the cycle of mutual help—the elders provided cattle from the herd for *lobola* and fines for the young men, who in turn went off to work and sent back money to buy more cattle. Reference has been made to 'the cloth of the spirits', when cattle were sold to provide cash for a young man who needed it, and the balance was used to buy cloth which was kept in the hut where the ancestral spirit was guarded. This cloth was the common property of all who belonged to the house owning the herd, and was returnable to the hut after it had been worn for some festive occasion. The forms which this mutual help could take were numerous and varied, and they all illustrated the fact that the correct and continuous observance of this reciprocity was considered by the Ngoni as one of the basic values underlying the ownership and use of cattle.

Among the group bound together by cattle-ownership this emphasis on mutual help as a desirable behaviour pattern had its counterpart in the social concept of integration. As we have seen, the Ngoni put a high value on 'staying together', on being united when challenged by a situation which made for disintegration. Within the social units of the house and family, the ownership of cattle and their care and use demanded some degree of co-operation through responsibility for the herd which was held in common. Integration between the living and their ancestors was also provided by the cattle. Common possession of a herd did more than just hold people together. The pattern of family and house organization which was characteristically Ngoni was given some stability through the ownership of cattle, allowing for the subdivision of herds when the new village 'went out', the exchanges at marriage, and the sacrifices at death.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

186 563 621 in the village, whom they regarded as inferior not only because they had been conquered, but because they disliked and despised their way of living. This sense of separateness from and of superiority to the non-Ngoni elements in the villages had its counterpart in the close ties which existed with Ngoni families in other villages. These ties were reinforced socially by 'dynastic' or inter-clan marriages, and politically through the hierarchy of courts and officials leading up to the Paramount's court and entourage.

[582] [631]

565 621 The Ngoni aristocracy endeavoured to maintain their traditional ways of living and of bringing up their children in the face of changes creeping in from the non-Ngoni elements in the village, as well as from external European influences. The maintenance of Ngoni ways of living and cultural patterns of behaviour depended on three main elements in village society. One was the degree of integration between the Ngoni men in their house groups and in village society as a whole. This was most evident in chiefs' villages, and in the villages belonging to the heads of clans. The second element was the number of wives of true Ngoni families who had married into the village, thus combining the influence of husband and wife, or rather of father and mother, in bringing up children on the Ngoni pattern. The third element was the number and influence of senior women of Ngoni families, either wives of older men in the village, or widows of former leaders. This senior women's group, many of whom were addressed as 'mother' by the Ngoni fathers of young families, were a formidable force in maintaining tradition, by advising their sons, coercing their daughters-in-law, and holding on to their authority at every stage of the children's development.

● [183] [177] [562] [593] [606]

Life in two Ngoni villages

121 [114] I am going briefly to sketch in, as a general background for the following chapters, the main features of two villages, in one of which I lived for several months, in the other for a few weeks.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

as young men, and had known the independence and supremacy of the Ngoni kingdoms. The expression 'everything is finished now' was often on their lips, especially when faced by new demands from the government, or by rebellious attitudes from their former subject peoples.

'The middle generation' was the term applied to the men who had as children known the Ngoni kingdoms in their prime. Though they had never fought as warriors nor been enrolled in an age-regiment, some of them had gone to the wars as young boys, carrying the gear for their older brothers. Many of these men, especially in the North, came under the influence of the missions, and became teachers, clerks, ministers and hospital assistants, married Christian wives and brought up their children in Christian, but Ngoni Christian, families. These men never lost their attachment to the Ngoni way of living, and many of them had made a successful synthesis of the old and the new ways. They stood, as they said, 'between' the generations, for they knew and understood both sides of an immensely different way of living and standard of values. Their children were 'the generation of today', who had no personal experience of past Ngoni ascendancy, and who took mission schooling and working for wages as a normal feature of their life.

When I lived in Ngoni villages, such as those described briefly in this chapter, Ngoni values and attitudes dominated social relationships. There was a determined struggle on the part of all responsible for child training to inculcate these Ngoni ideas and ways of living. The senior men and women were aware of the constant and increasing infiltration into their way of living of ideas, attitudes and behaviour coming from other ethnic groups in their midst. In addition their culture was being undermined by European influences in the schools, in the money economy, and from modern political developments, emphasizing an all-Nyasaland sentiment rather than loyalties based on ethnic grouping. Ngoni pride of race, and a consciousness that they had a

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

answers to them somewhere, then there have been some vital omissions in the narrative.

Clues to this study

In relating this study to other field studies and analyses of socialization techniques and processes, I have not attempted to present here any general assessment of similar or related studies, much less any review of the field as a whole, since I have touched on both in earlier publications.[1] Instead I have brought into this chapter one or two clues or guide lines from other sources which seemed to me to elucidate some of my problems, particularly in regard to four main aspects of this study, which have already been mentioned in Chapter I and which to a large extent set the limits and determine the emphases of this book. The 'true Ngoni' were a society within a society, a distinct cultural group within the Ngoni kingdom. This society of theirs had sharp edges, definable and recognizable limits, and that partly accounted for their own awareness of themselves as distinct from, though at so many points connected with, the neighbouring peoples. Their culture, that is their way of living within this society, had definite values which they strove to maintain, and this was one of the reasons why the ideal Ngoni personality pattern, and their endeavour to see it reproduced in each child, was easy to recognize. In order to safeguard their society and maintain their culture they exercised a fairly rigid social control over the upbringing of their children, which resulted in something approaching a 'system' of training and educating children. Set against this conservation of traditional values however was the reality and extent of changes due to external circumstances mentioned at the end of Chapter I. In the face of these changes the Ngoni showed that they could adapt some of them to their own purposes, and they made use of the schools, for example, once they approved of them, to help adjust their

[1] See Appendix (i)

of this book, especially Chapters IV and V will show how the organization of Ngoni society and the cultural way of living in it, necessarily surrounded the life of children and the training given to them with a much wider horizon. We shall talk about the family, the household, the village as the setting of Ngoni child life, but these terms have to be interpreted according to the Ngoni social organization, sketched very briefly in Chapter I and set out at length in my earlier book *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*. Looked at from another angle, we can see that a young child's horizon in Ngoni villages was limited at first to what he saw around him and the people who had daily or frequent contact with him and who understood and supplied his daily needs. But that circle of people forming a young child's contacts was from the beginning much wider than the individual family which a child was born into. When he began to run about and to pass beyond the restricted confines of the household, it was as we shall see, the duty and responsibility of all Ngoni adults to notice his behaviour and correct him when necessary.

The relationships inside the large Ngoni families, between one family and another in a Ngoni village, with related families in other villages, with all members of the same clan living in an area—these were threads in the web of kinship and clanship which united the Ngoni people. These threads were also inseparable from the political links between the people and their territorial chief, and between the whole people and the Paramount, the head of the kingdom. The difference, however, between the Ngoni kingdom under the Paramount which included all his subjects of Ngoni and non-Ngoni ethnic groups, and the Ngoni aristocracy in the villages was a profound difference. It was the latter who understood, appreciated and sought to hand on to their children Ngoni ways of living based on Ngoni values. Hence in most villages there were sharp distinctions between standards of behaviour within Ngoni families and in non-Ngoni families.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

anxious to protect her charge in every way, and with the connivance of the women helpers she made little charms of bits of roots to hang around the baby's neck to make him grow quickly and to ward off sorcery and witchcraft. She threaded pumpkin seeds and tied them around his neck to make his teeth come quickly if they were late in appearing. These charms were generally those used by the local peoples, and Ngoni fathers were contemptuous about their use and efficacy. 'These women are spoiling our children,' they said, and then reassured themselves by remembering that a boy would be free from such women's spoiling once he went into the boys' dormitory.

Variants on the Ngoni pattern

This traditional pattern of authority and behaviour in respect of birth, infant care and weaning was essentially that of the true Ngoni, that relatively small aristocratic group who never forgot their superior social status and its foundation in their ancestry. This first stage in the socialization of a child, from birth to weaning, brought out clearly two fundamental features of Ngoni social organization. One was the role played by the senior women who had themselves in their childhood been brought up on strict Ngoni lines. The father of the new baby accepted the role played by his own mother in controlling, and if necessary coercing, his young wife. Though, as we shall see later, every Ngoni boy and young man had a period of virtually complete escape from feminine control, once a man married and his young wife was established within the social group of his mother's house, he acknowledged his mother's authority over her, and particularly over the birth and care of his child. The mother-son relationship of the young father to his own mother dominated the relationship of the young mother to her child. Young Ngoni fathers never questioned their allegiance to their own mothers, cherishing them as they grew older and supporting them in their exercise of authority. Much as he loved his

young wife, an Ngoni husband would not normally support her against his own mother. In the case of his child, who was born a member of his family, house and clan, his mother and her circle of senior women had uncontested sway. 596 861

The second features of Ngoni social organization which the 'arrival of a new stranger' demonstrated was the women's interest in and capacity for planning and organization. The senior women had no doubt about what steps to take and who should take them, from the time when labour began till after weaning. The preparations for the birth, the receiving of the child, the care of mother and baby after birth, the ritual cleansing of the hut, the presentation of the child to the public—all these acts up to and including weaning were planned with what seemed an elaborate organization when first observed, but which turned out to be standard Ngoni practice. Two particular aspects of this organization stood out as different from the local practices: the provision for artificial feeding of the child, and the role played by nurse girls and women helpers. 183 596 [184]

The main variants in this pattern arose from three causes: the effect of marriage with women of other ethnic groups who married into Ngoni families and had to accept the pattern of authority imposed by the house organization of Ngoni women. They therefore had to follow in its main lines the procedures we have described for the birth and care of infants. But Ngoni men and women deplored in particular two non-Ngoni elements which were creeping into the conduct of birth and post-natal ceremonies. One was the attitude taken during difficult labour when the women attending to the mother tried to force her to confess to illicit sexual relations which the non-Ngoni believed to be the cause of the delayed birth. The other was the prohibition on a wife putting salt in the food she was cooking while she was menstruating or at any other ritually unclean period. The true Ngoni despised this salt taboo and the women of Ngoni families did not practise it. 177 563 [845] [841]

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

choice and variety of food, was primarily to please him, and to meet the incessant claims on his hospitality when visitors came. A well-ordered and harmonious household also pleased him, and conversely the sounds of women quarrelling angered him and violated his canons of accepted Ngoni behaviour. It was his wife's task to supervise the household helpers, who were mostly non-Ngoni, and to make them conform to Ngoni patterns by controlling their rages, instead of yelling at each other and hurling accusations of witchcraft at those with whom they were angry.

Ngoni women also took a serious view of another aspect of pleasing their husbands, namely attention to their person and dress. The old elaborate hair-dressing of Ngoni women, the scrupulous washing of their bodies with sweet-smelling leaves, the use of oil and clarified butter on the skin and hair, and the careful tying and draping of cloths and arranging of bead headbands and necklaces—these all were forms of beauty treatment and personal hygiene designed to please the husband. They also reinforced the self-respect and authority of well-born Ngoni women, marking them out by their well-groomed appearance from the 'workers' and 'helpers' who surrounded them.

The young Ngoni child, up to the age of six or seven, grew up in a women's world of the kind just described. His mother was learning from his paternal grandmother the increasing duties and responsibilities of an Ngoni wife, although she was supposed to have learned some of them in her own home from her mother before marriage. We saw in Chapter II how the social horizons of a small Ngoni child were never of a narrow type, restricted to his individual family. The care of a child, especially between the time of weaning and the coming of second teeth, was the concern of a number of women in addition to his own mother, from whom he was snatched away at weaning, and, for a time at least, kept away from her household for eating and sleeping.

Among the female population of a village most nearly

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

INTRODUCTION

MARRIAGE among the Ngoni is much the same as anywhere else. It establishes a relationship between a man and a woman, regulates their sexual activities, locates their children in the kinship system and influences the inheritance of their property. These general features, however, do no more than define and identify marriage, and distinguish marriage from concubinage. Our task is to analyse the particular features that distinguish Ngoni marriage from other marriage systems and to relate marriage to other institutions and social processes in Ngoni society.

In Ngoni history there has always been marriage. Indeed men and women look back longingly to a past when people married properly and decorously, and when adulterers were killed, and bemoan the promiscuity of the present when no woman's fidelity is certain. Yet even now old people still expect their juniors to marry and their expectations are fulfilled. Adults are assumed to be married, and the assumption is justified.

Marriage is seen by the Ngoni as part of the natural order. Unmarried adults cannot fill important roles and are regarded as overgrown children whose anomalous condition must be explained by reference to a malady or a physical or moral defect. Yet despite the universal and permanent character of marriage as an Ngoni institution there have been, in the course of the hundred and thirty years which constitute Ngoni history, great changes in the procedures and implications of marriage and in its relations to other aspects of the social life of which it is a part. These changes have been paralleled in other Ngoni institutions, in law, in local organization, in religion and above all in political structure. In this paper we shall attempt to contrast the institution of marriage as seen at two stages in Ngoni history and to relate it to the general plan of social life at these two periods. We shall also discuss some of the processes of change that have brought about the differences we observe and which to some extent are still at work in contemporary Ngoni society.

It is convenient to compare marriage as it was during the 1890's and as it is at the present day. The information relating to the earlier period is contained only to a slight extent in contemporary documents,[1] and consists largely in the recollections of older men and women as recorded by a number of writers from 1914 onwards. The

[1] The most important of these are Wiese's articles, 'Expedição portugueza a M'Pesêne (1889)', in *Boletim da Sociedade de Geographia de Lisboa*, x (1891) pp. 235-73, 331-430, 465-97, and xi (1892) pp. 373-599. (All page references cited are from Vol. X); and 'Beitrage zûr Geschichte der Zulu im Norden des Zambesi, namentlich der Angoni,' *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xxxii (1900), pp. 181-200.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

contributed by the whole nation, were not found among the Ngoni.

Informants are agreed that in the old days young men and women married whom they were told and never attempted to make their own choice against their parents' will. From evidence available this seems to be an oversimplification. It seems likely that individual choice mattered less in those days than it does now, but it cannot have been entirely inoperative. It is said that each regiment of men used to flirt with its corresponding women's regiment, and that marriages sometimes followed. Wiese says that among the aristocratic families a woman had the right to choose her own husband, but that this right was dying out and it was becoming the practice to marry off daughters so as to secure the most marriage cattle and maintain upper-class endogamy.[3] It is true that on the evidence of genealogies there do not seem to have been many marriages between very aristocratic women and the most recently captured men, and that therefore we are justified in assuming a tendency towards upper-class endogamy, but this tendency seems not to have been very strong and indeed there never was a clear-cut upper class but instead a method of ranking families in terms of ethnic origin. My informants never suggested that a man would marry his daughter so as to bring in as many cattle as possible, and it seems unlikely that this was ever a common motive.[4]

A girl was expected to be chaste before she was married. From the procedure adopted by the Zulu and from information from other Ngoni groups, it seems likely that girls were examined at marriage to check that they had not been deflowered. Rattray records this among the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland,[5] and Read makes a similar statement.[6] My own informants had such faith in the sexual rectitude of the past as contrasted with the promiscuity of the present that it was difficult to establish what they really thought happened. It seems that unmarried people were allowed intercourse *inter crura* and that this was considered not a violation of chastity. The whole question has been obscured by the conflict of values between the South-Eastern Bantu leaders, whose view appeared to have prevailed at the time, and the recent captives from the Cewa and kindred peoples, who believed that a girl would die if she did not copulate at puberty. We shall see the outcome of this conflict when we come to discuss modern marriage.

As might be anticipated in a system in which marriage is a transfer of fertility, a wife was expected to be fertile. If she was barren special procedures were adopted to validate the substance of the marriage. A man could appeal to his wife's relatives for another

[3] Wiese, op. cit. 'Expediçao . . .', p. 473 and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 191.
[4] See below, p. 120.
[5] Rattray, *Some folk-lore stories and songs in Chinyanja, with English translation and notes*, S.P.C.K., 1907, p. 115.
[6] Margaret Read, 'The Moral code of the Ngoni and their former military state', *Africa*, xi (1938), p. 6.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

was left to the discretion of her father. 'Snuff-box' was handed over before the man began to sleep with his bride while bridewealth could be paid either then or later after the woman had borne children. Once bridewealth had been paid the rights of the man's group were definitely established and, in the event of the man's death, one of his younger brothers became the widow's pro-husband in leviratic marriage.

The significance of bridewealth is clearly indicated by the procedure followed in marriages in which it was not paid. If a man paid 'snuff-box' and then died before he paid bridewealth, the children of the marriage belonged to his wife's kinsmen and not to his kinsmen. His brothers could secure the woman as the wife of one of them, and the children as legitimate members of their segment, by payment of bridewealth. It is said that a woman could refuse to go to a brother of her dead husband under these conditions but that she could not refuse to give up the children to the husband's kinsman who paid bridewealth. If although bridewealth had been paid she went off and married another unrelated man the children she bore to her new husband belonged to her dead husband's kin.

Some informants say that if a man died without having paid bridewealth his sons were under an obligation to pay cattle to their mother's kin on behalf of their dead father, but I did not hear of any instance in which this had been done. Similarly it is said that if a man had paid bridewealth but had never been given a linked co-wife, his son could claim a wife from the kin of the woman for whom bridewealth had been handed over. Other informants deny this possibility, and say that it was the man's son's son who could have made this claim. I did not hear of any instances of either practice in the past and when recently a chief tried to claim a wife on the strength of bridewealth offered by his father, he failed.

Important men sometimes married female captives and no bridewealth passed. These wives were usually not of high status and their sons founded lines junior to those of sons by other wives for whom bridewealth had been paid.

The general impression gained from the tales of old informants and from the contemporary literature is that 'snuff-box' and bridewealth were paid in most marriages. The evidence, such as it is, from a survey of the marriages experienced since birth by men and women alive in 1946-9 suggests that this was not so. The way in which this survey was conducted is described below.[13] The information on pre-1898 marriages is set out in Tables I and II.

It will be seen that in half (7 out of 14) of these marriages, no payments at all were offered. In the marriage in which 'snuff-box' was offered it consisted not of a beast but of a quantity of tobacco. In about a third of the marriages the only payment made was the 'legalization payment', which traditionally was not part of the pre-1898

[13] See pp. 22f.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

marriage system. We shall discuss the legalization payment at some length in the succeeding chapters, for it is the most important of all the payments made in modern marriage. A possible explanation of its occurrence in these early marriages is that although the marriages themselves were made before 1898, the payments were made considerably later. The amounts alleged to have been handed over as legalization payments may have been regarded as 'snuff-box' at the time of payment although they are now referred to as legalization payments, either because of the general obsolescence of the term 'snuff-box' or because my informants thought I would know the new term and not the old one. Another possibility is that even before 1898 the vernacular term for legalization payment (*cimalo*) was in use as a synonym for 'snuff-box'. The term itself was certainly in use among neighbouring tribes before 1898.

This is a very small sample from which to draw any conclusions, but it is of value in suggesting where the reality of social life differed

Table I. Pre-1898 marriage payments: incidence

Payments made	Number of marriages
'Snuff-box' only	1
Bridewealth only	1
Legalization payment only	5
None	7
Total	14
Not known if any payments were made or not	4
Grand total	18
In this sample there were no pre-1898 marriages in which more than one kind of payment was made	

Table II. Pre-1898 marriage payments; magnitude

Payment	Magnitude	Number of marriages
'Snuff-box'	Handful of tobacco	1
Bridewealth	8 beasts	1
Legalization payment	1 beast	2
	1 chicken	1
	Cloth	1
	Not known	1
	Total	5

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

But we know from other areas 121
that loss of sovereignty itself does not necessarily disrupt the marriage arrangements of common people and we must look elsewhere for an explanation.

2. Movement between villages

The old villages formed part of the residential system, and their 621
structure was maintained by the power of the central chieftainship, as expressed through the lieutenants of the royal villages, and by the diffuse sanction of public opinion based on ideas held in common as to the rights conferred by the payment of bridewealth. Nowadays [178]
the lieutenants of the royal villages have very much less power, and bridewealth is not often paid. The village is held together by the various ties of kinship and affinity between its members, and to a slight extent by the restriction of movement from one village to another. This control, exercised by the Administration through the [648]
system of registration of adult males, is largely ineffective except in the Resettlement Areas.[3] Men and women are more or less free to live wherever they can find relatives, and if they quarrel in one village they can move to another where they hope life will be more pleasant. There is no general rule to which appeal can be made concerning whether a married couple should live uxorilocally or virilocally. Hence a quarrel between man and wife or between affinally related people may lead to a split in the village, and the dissident section may attempt to form a village of its own or attach itself to another village. It is therefore in the interests of the [620]
headman that quarrels in his village should be settled as rapidly as possible, and he has therefore an interest in the private lives of his people even though they may not be his close relatives. His interests are represented by his lieutenants and are shared by everyone in the village who wishes his own to be a large prosperous and happy village. The theme of the good and happy village recurs in many [183]
of the formal situations of Ngoni life and finds expression in much of local action on a village basis, as for example in the competitive dances, the division of food at a ceremony and the organization of the religious sects.

We find therefore that the headman and his lieutenants participate [622]
in the ceremonies of marriage and in marital quarrels. Conversely the headman is brought into relationship with the married couple by the allocation to him of pots of beer whenever there is a general distribution even though he may not be at the ceremony. Other important men and women similarly participate merely because of their common membership of the village. For example, a hoeing party was led by a middle-aged woman who was described as 'an important person' in the son-in-law's village. She was in fact

[3] Areas which have been reopened to settlement by Ngoni and other tribes since 1941 with various restrictions on agricultural methods and on population. About ten per cent of Ngoni live in Resettlement Areas.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni
Maravi FR4

of maternal ties, the cleavage between sets of father's children is an expression more of their different matrilateral affiliations than of the different status of their mothers. A child will be sent to its own mother's mother rather than to its father's wife's mother, although some children do go to the latter. Samuel's children by his first and third wives [3] were reared by their father's fourth wife's mother, but they maintain contact with their own mothers' relatives.

These particular structural changes have taken place without any great conflict of values. It would appear that although polygyny was an essential feature of the old system, there was no idea that it was wrong to remain monogamous. Indeed in any community with a normal sex ratio, the majority of men must be monogamists and it is not surprising that monogamy is tolerated however much polygyny is the goal of ambitious men. Among the Ngoni the decline in polygyny over the last fifty years has not outraged traditional values. In like manner, we have seen that traditionally a man's mother and his wife's mother should share the rearing of his children. This division is in accord with the statement made frequently by aristocratic Ngoni that when distributing gifts a man ought not to favour his own parents more than his wife's. Both these injunctions indicate that even in 'the time of peace', however clearly a man's children by a wife for whom he had paid bridewealth belonged to his group and not to hers, the claims of a wife's kinsfolk and their interest in the children of the marriage were recognized. Ngoni say that children ought to live in their father's village, but this is a statement of the same order as the oft-reiterated remark that the Ngoni pay bridewealth. Ngoni make these statements because these are part of the index of their tribal identity, not because they have observed them to be true. The facility with which married couples live uxorilocally is no doubt partly due to the influence of the matrilineal uxorilocal Cewa and other tribes, but we cannot regard this as the only operative factor.

4. The moral significance of sexual activity

In the treatment of sexual activity in girls there does appear to be a certain moral dilemma. We have observed that the Cewa believed that a girl who did not copulate at puberty would die, and that the Ngoni held that a girl should be chaste until she was married, which was some time after puberty. The seclusion of girls was, and is, a matter arranged by women and one in which men have very little say. It may be on this account that the Cewa view has largely prevailed, for the Ngoni took many women captives and in the early stages of the migration from Natal there seem to have been more Ngoni men than women. The women were not so carefully indoctrinated into the Ngoni way of life as were men captives, for the women's regimental system was never as highly

[3] See above, p. 109

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

rights at all. The payment of bridewealth had in the past enabled affinally related groups of kin to 'foresee the behaviour of one another in given situations since the payments evoke the behaviour'[10] but now the given situations were unlikely to occur. We may say then in this second phase poverty and uncertainty about the overall system of social relationships within which marriages would continue caused marriage payments to be low and, in some instances, non-existent.

The gradual increase in power of the Native Authority and the contemporaneous increased participation in the money economy have brought about further changes in the third phase, beginning round about 1930. In recent years the value of the legalization payment has increased and seems likely to increase further. This change is demonstrated in Table VII, although we must recall that the time classification in this table is by year of marriage, not year of payment. Similar increases have been noted among other Eastern Province tribes, notwithstanding cultural differences between them and the Ngoni. This increase has been possible because of the rise in wages and prices, but we cannot regard this as the sole cause. This simple hypothesis is ruled out by the simultaneous fall in bridewealth, as suggested by Table VI. While wages have risen, the rights associated with bridewealth have declined in importance and those associated with the legalization payment have remained significant. A high payment gives each particular marriage the mark of stability, yet at the same time the process which enables a young man to offer as much as £10 for his bride without appealing to his kinsmen for help has also made his expectation of life-long marriage with her less than it would have been thirty years ago, when he would have offered only 6s. Men earn money in Southern Rhodesia and the Copperbelt. They move freely between urban and rural environments, using the money to make large marriage payments in the villages. They stand on their own, do not call on their senior agnates for help, marry where they will, and settle with that headman whose village most attracts them or is most conveniently situated for siting a new shop. Yet if in this way they can free themselves from prescribed affiliation to a kin group, so can their children do the same. The former structural basis for stable marriage, the invariable affiliation of children to their agnatic group, has gone. There is as yet no system of law and morals, nor sufficient interest in inheritable property, to provide an alternative means of stablizing marriage. As among the Ila, high marriage payments accompany frequent divorce.

The hypothesis that increased frequency of divorce among the Ngoni is due mainly to the breakdown of their agnatic system may be supported by comparison with the Zulu and other Natal tribes. Here the old system, characterized by strong agnatic affiliation and

[10] *ibid*, p. 172.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

585 bride herself refuses to sit on the mat until she has been given a present. She is joined on the mat by a small girl, aged about ten, from the groom's family, who becomes known as 'the guide'.[1] The leader of the bride's party and one other of the bride's women sit down on the mat, with the bride and the guide between them.

The instruction of the bride now begins, with a speech from some important man in the village, who takes the gall bladder and anoints [237] the head, arms and feet of the bride with the gall, going on to anoint the guide in the same way. They are then sometimes anointed with vaseline by a woman. One person after another, men and women, [867] now proceed to lecture the bride on how she should behave in the village, and each explains to her who he or she is in relation to her. The gall bladder is blown up and stuck in the hair of the bride, where she will keep it until she returns to her own village. Each person who delivers a speech of instruction gives a small present, a threepenny bit or beads, which they put into a plate on the mat at the bride's feet. This situation of formal instruction, often of an [183] abusive nature, accompanied by presents, is a recurrent one in Ngoni ceremonial.[2]

[239] Sometimes the small intestine of the animal is placed round the shoulders of a younger sister of the bride who is a member of her party. This girl is then designated linked co-wife (*nshanzi*) of the bride. This is not always done, and when it is done it does not imply that the girl will later become the real linked co-wife of her elder sister. Although in the two ceremonies I saw this designation of a linked co-wife did not occur, in both a sister of the bride was one of the bridal party.

[262] At the end of the instruction, the bride and her party go back into their own hut, and the leader cooks the liver of the animal, and the blood and fat. This she divides between the two families, sending the portion of the bridegroom's family to their hut for them to eat there. The guide stays in the bride's hut. After they have rested, the bride, guide, and their companions leave the village, taking the meat with them back to the bride's village. Outside her village the party stop, and are met by more women from the bride's family. The guide demands a small present before she will enter the village, usually beads. Inside the village the bride's mother takes the gall bladder from her daughter's head and buries it in the byre. The guide stays in the village for a few days, and demands another small present before she will assist the bride's people with cooking. When a quantity of flour has been pounded for the bride, and some maize half-pounded for the guide, the bride and the guide return quietly to the bridegroom's village. The bride begins to live with her husband, and the guide resumes her normal

[1] *Mpelekezi*, from the verb *ku-pelekeza*, to accompany part of the way. Cf. Zulu *impelesi*, girl accompanying a bride to her wedding.

[2] See above, p. 77.

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

643 take the "child," going with him to a hut to give him instruction, saying, "To-day you stand alone. Look after your people as did your father before you.
● [183] If a man be at fault, forgive him; but the sin of adultery cannot be pardoned."

IV

THE UNAMWALI CEREMONY

881 I. When a young girl finds she has become a woman, she goes and stands beside the pathway [leading to the village]. Any one passing finds her there, standing silent. If it be a man who notices her, he goes off and tells some woman, saying to her, "I have come across game, go and lift it." An old woman goes off to speak to her. She finds the girl, her face enveloped in her calico, and giving no answer to any question put to her. Then the old woman knows the girl is now a matured woman, and takes her off to the stream to bathe her. On returning with her from the water she places her in the hut of the head old woman of the village. (The old woman who first found her is the head of the ensuing ceremony.) Then the old woman goes off to inform other elderly women that "the maiden has reached womanhood." The girl remains in the hut six days. Should she be of the clan of
[614] *Kuoni*, they give her porridge made from millet
[262] only, if of any other clan, porridge made of any grain. In her relish they do not put salt. Her porridge she eats out of an old basket, and the relish from a potsherd. (This old basket will be

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

12. *Customary Licence* (*Ngoni*).

N 836 [183] [684] [583]

Pre-marital intercourse was strictly forbidden, but it is now the general practice, though disapproved of by the elders. While rarely claimed, it is still possible for a father to obtain damages from a man who is proved to have had connexion with his young unmarried daughter; and the bride-price is reduced when it is known that a girl has been playing fast and loose as a regular habit.

13. *Dissolution of Marriage* (*Ngoni*).

N 586 [595]

Connubial disputes are decided at the husband's village. A wife may not be divorced on account of barrenness; but in such a case her father gives the husband a younger sister without further *mabeka*, or arranges with a friend or relation to give his daughter in return for a smaller bride-price.

When a divorce has been granted, it is made effective by the husband's *nakhonse* taking the wife home and handing her back to her father. If there are no children, the bride-price is returned, together with the *mcheka*, *kutendera* and other presents made before marriage. Presents made by husband to wife after marriage are considered to be the woman's own property, and she takes them with her. If there are several children, the husband keeps them, and his father-in-law retains the bride-price. If there is only one child, and the bride-price was large, the husband keeps the child and also receives back a portion of the bride-price, the guiding principle being a fair division. When the father is absent and is entitled to the children, his relations take charge of them. But even though the father may be given legal ownership, neither Angoni nor Achewa ever take small children away from their mother, with whom they must remain "until they are able to understand," the father being allowed meanwhile to visit them from time to time.

M [586]

III.—DOMESTIC LIFE: FILIAL.

1. *Infancy*.

M 845

Among the Achewa, twins were never killed. After being washed in medicine, they were taken with a present of a goat to the chief, who thereupon gave them their names. Until that was done, the chief could not visit their village. At night one twin sleeps on each side of the mother, who lies on her back. If one of them dies young, it is buried with a fruit of the "sausage tree" (*kigelia pinnata*), so that it may not be lonely. Formerly, twin girls married the same man at the same time, and twin brothers married their first wives at the same time.

[582]

M 429

Guardianship of a child is always vested in the father until initiation, when it passes to the *mwiburesi*, and on his death to the mother's other brothers, and then to the mother's sons.

N 429 593

Among the Angoni, the father is always guardian, with the modification that after marriage a girl must obey her husband before all others. When the father is dead, the father's brothers succeed according to age, then the father's sons in order, and then the sons of the father's brothers in their order.

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

in general, encouraged co-operation between tribes and have treated all tribes as equals. They have emphasized the values of peace rather than a war, and have condemned pagan rites. In the light of this teaching legends have been modified to conform to modern values. The barbarity of the raids has been minimized and the good qualities of the old military discipline have been extolled. Sometimes men say that the old armies never fought but only danced, or that people from other tribes were not captured but all joined the Ngoni of their own free will (as in fact some did). It is said that there was never any ancestor-worship; the names of the Paramount Chief's ancestors were merely mentioned in prayers "as King George is mentioned now". This process by which the Ngoni conquerors of yesterday are made to look like the European conquerors of today is no new phenomenon. The Ngoni identified themselves with European rather than with their matrilineal neighbours even before the European conquest. Wiese, himself the main agent of their defeat, wrote, "They are very proud, looking down on all the other tribes with contempt, and think they show great courtesy whenever they assure the European traveller that the Whites may be related to them."[4]

Another traveller, arriving from the south in 1896, relates how he ran into an armed patrol on the outskirts of Ngoni country. His own carriers ran away but he called out to the patrol that he was a friend of the Paramount Chief, speaking in Zulu. He then heard them saying, "He is an Ngoni and a white man."[5] My own informants told me that the old Ngoni language was closer to English than to Nyanja.

This reinterpretation of the past in the light of the present has not produced a consistent picture of a proto-European society. The inconsistencies of the present remain and are reflected in the ambivalent attitude adopted to the past. Although in one context people recall that everything was well ordered and peaceful in the past, in other contexts they dwell on the unlimited power of the Paramount Chief and the fierceness of his warriors. An aristocratic man once said to me at a beer party, "If this was the old days I would kill all these Cewa drinking here." Yet the general impression which people usually try to convey is of a disciplined, proud, and successful people.

This picture is accepted not only by Ngoni themselves but also by Europeans. For us it is one part of the good old days when Africans still smiled and were nature's gentlemen. Our picture of the Ngoni contains fewer concessions to contemporary White values, for the very distinction between Whites now and Blacks then increases the attractiveness of the picture. Ancestor worship and polygyny are not unwelcome in a Black Arcadia.

Ngoni nowadays compare themselves with their European and Indian neighbours and envy their apparent power and wealth. They seek to rationalize their own relative failure in terms of their past. It is in this connection

4. Wiese, *Geschichte*, pp. 200 f.

5. Later, when he had satisfactorily answered questions on Zululand geography, Mp'zeni said of him, "He is a chief . . . he is an Angoni, one of us." Deare, *Slave Raiders*, pp. 19 and 25.

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8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

829 178 blame the Europeans for it; but it remains part of the distinctive cultural heritage of the tribe.

As we might expect, notions of this kind do not provide sanctioned 182 standards of conduct nor ideal patterns towards which Ngoni strive. They may be used to explain or justify a state of affairs, as we have seen, but they do not directly determine action. An individual who departs from traditional custom, in these terms, is not necessarily censured. Indeed, men who are [591] knowledgeable about the glorious past do not follow traditional ways any more than do less-well-informed people. According to tradition the Ngoni are a virilocal people, yet if a man goes to live with his wife's relatives his own kinsfolk cannot force him to return by appeal to this virilocal tradition. [606] Traditionally a man avoids his mother-in-law. Yet I once saw an aristocratic man, a great authority on traditional history, on leave from work sitting on a verandah chatting with his mother-in-law. I said to him, "I thought a man should avoid his mother-in-law." He laughed and replied, "Yes, so he should. This behaviour is disgusting, and as soon as I come to live here permanently I shall see that customs are properly followed."

647 619 In certain situations the Fort Jameson Ngoni appear as a tribe in contrast to other tribes. The tribe is an administrative unit, with its own chiefs, its own area and sometimes its own District Officer. Representatives from each tribe in the region sit together to form the Native Urban Court and the Provincial Advisory Council. The Ngoni representatives on these bodies 693 184 tend to present distinctively Ngoni views to contrast with the views of their colleagues. Thus there may be a discussion on wills. There is an Ngoni view, 648 182 a Cewa view, and so on. The Ngoni representative repeats the old story about bridewealth, virilocal residence, the rights of the eldest son, and these are recorded as being the Ngoni custom in the matter. Even when discussing such an apparently modern issue as wills, the tendency is to go back to this mythical past. It is in terms of this past, in reality as well as in myth, that Ngoni are different from their neighbours. In the present, as contrasted with Europeans, Ngoni and Cewa are much the same. Ngoni pay bridewealth in the same way as the English eat roast beef. It is a national characteristic, but ●183 one located in the minds of men rather than observable in their actions or their aspirations. Instead of the scarifications and totemic observances which distinguish their neighbours, Ngoni express their tribal identity by having distinctive customs which, conveniently, need not be followed.

183 692 184 In the Native Urban Court a similar process appears to operate, but here, unlike at the Advisory Council, there is a greater need to come to grips with real situations which require action, and tribal distinctiveness is tempered with practical reality. In the purely Ngoni Native Courts appeals are made to traditional practice in a different way. The courts are required by the 671 Administration to follow tribal custom and people know that the courts are bound in this way. In fact, however, the courts have continually to deal with 692 183 new situations and to make decisions which are unprecedented. This is done

8: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5

under the guise of drawing attention to some good Ngoni custom which has been neglected. Thus, for example, a man came to court saying that he was always quarrelling with his wife and that he wished to divorce her. The bench granted the divorce and awarded the woman 30*s.* damages. The litigant protested. The junior member of the bench, a man aged about 25 years, said, "Don't you know, it has always been the custom in this court to award 30*s.* damages against men who divorce their wives?" Yet this was a comparatively recent practice and the litigant's protest seemed, to me, to be quite justified. The young man had been on the bench only about eighteen months. Even without Administrative stimulus, deliberate acts of legislation are not unknown among the Ngoni, but they require considerable discussion and probably a tribal meeting. It is easier, particularly for a court member as junior as the man in question, to appeal to the unwritten corpus of tribal custom when introducing a new rule. An analogous process in our own society is perhaps concealed under the fiction that judges do not make law. Ngoni do not quote specific precedents in court, and in this undocumented environment new decisions, if they are not soon challenged, become part of what has always been the custom since time immemorial.

We may then summarize by saying that their common store of notions about the past provides Ngoni with a means of distinguishing themselves from similar groups at a time when the cultural distinctions between these groups are in fact becoming less and less. In the Courts, appeals to the value of traditional custom are made to gain acceptance for new rulings, while in ordinary life breaches of custom are widespread and are not censured.

When we consider legends associated with particular groups within he tribe the picture is rather different. Separate groups in the population remember, and sometimes act in the light of, particular incidents in the past which link them to other similar groups. Thus village A is linked with village B because of some incident in the past when the erstwhile leader of A captured the leader of B, or because at one time the leaders of A and B were brothers. These incidents, and the present inter-group relations with which they are associated, are not known universally but only by the groups concerned and by those near them. Yet in many ways these incidents are of greater practical significance than the more widely known tribal history. The relationships to which they give rise, or rather such of these relationships as have persisted, are remembered at funerals, in the formal exchanges of beer, and in the settlement of quarrels. There are at first glance no sanctions to maintain relationships of this kind, and indeed the very separate existence of two villages A and B may be due to a quarrel followed by a split. But although, for example, when an old woman dies in A there is no way of directly forcing a messenger to carry the news to B, there is in fact a greal deal of social pressure on both groups to keep alive the connection between them. This arises from the general responsibility placed on everyone to preserve the peace, that is, to preserve the existing social order intact. If there are

TRADITION AND PRESTIGE AMONG THE NGONI

MARGARET READ

I. The Ngoni People. Before I made my first camp in an Ngoni village, many Europeans had said to me, 'There are practically no Ngoni left to-day. They are all hopelessly mixed with other tribes. None of them keep to the Ngoni customs any longer. Their chiefs are no good.' From the doorway of my hut I saw people coming all day long to the Paramount Chief, behaving towards him with profound respect, bringing him presents, working for him. His children formed a special group in the village, easily recognizable by their bearing and their manners. Old *indumas*[1] came to instruct me, as they had instructed chiefs in their day, on the duties of a ruler, and the code of Ngoni laws. Old warriors in war dress came and danced by the cattle kraal and sang praise songs. Courts were held with scrupulous regard for order and justice. Other chiefs came visiting from distant parts with their retinues, and were received ceremonially. It soon became apparent that here was the centre of a political state, whose head was invested with prestige and authority over a wide area, and where behaviour to the Paramount and to every one else was strictly regulated by custom, and as strictly observed. These were Ngoni, and they and their fellow Ngoni in other areas[1] for the next ten months introduced me to the Ngoni people. The European assertion, that they no longer existed as a people, they laughed at, and proceeded to demonstrate that the contrary was true.

The Ngoni are found to-day scattered over four East African territories. The largest groups are in Nyasaland in the districts of Mzimba, Dowa, Fort Manning, Dedza, and Ncheu. In Northern Rhodesia they are in the Fort Jameson and Lundazi districts bordering on Nyasaland. Another section is in Portuguese East Africa on the South-West border of Nyasaland. Under other names there are Ngoni settlements in Tanganyika Territory. The present divisions of the Ngoni are due partly to European frontiers, partly to the fact that more than

[1] According to the census returns there are about 80,000 Ngoni in Northern Rhodesia and nearly 250,000 in Nyasaland, with other groups in Tanganyika Territory and Portuguese East Africa.

[1] [i.e., military leaders.—Analyst]

it might almost be called nation-building. And when you have heard the Ngoni Paramount discuss the position of minorities in his country, and his claim to territories no longer under his rule, you could almost imagine you were in the corridors of the League Secretariat at Geneva.

The Ngoni state, however, to-day is not only a political structure, a framework for political and social life. Within that structure, forming parts of it, are institutions embodying those social, political, economic, and ethical values which are peculiarly Ngoni. The Ngoni, that is to say, when they absorbed other peoples into their state, imposed upon them a new social order together with the values inherent in that order. Patrilineal succession and inheritance, for example, introduced by the Ngoni, was bound up with the relations of father to son, the acquiring and distribution of cattle, the worship of clan and family ancestors. Each institution had its clearly related rules and values, and these are made explicit by the Ngoni when they describe them. The casual European observer in the country sees only the Paramount Chief and his subordinate chiefs ruling over a welter of tribes with a confusing mixture of social behaviour. To the Ngoni, however, and to the anthropologist who follows their lead, the pattern of society which they set up is clear and definite; it has a cultural reality of its own. The seeming welter of tribes is in reality an ordered relationship. Each group, tribe, or clan, has its recognized place *vis-à-vis* other groups. Within that ordered relationship the different groups have pursued a process of preserving some customs and adopting others, and they can give a coherent account of what they have retained and what they have borrowed. The real Ngoni do not admit to borrowing much. They like to think of their society as very distinctive as well as being well integrated. Yet the degree of modification in Ngoni society needs very close investigation because it shows much variety in different localities.

When they entered their present areas the Ngoni were very inferior in numbers to the indigenous people. How was it then that they were able to subdue them? And having subdued them, how did they pre-

mark' of the Ngoni as various forms of tattooing were of other tribes. Ear-piercing was sometimes forced (i.e. upon captives taken in war), sometimes voluntary. To-day children of local clans are teased by children of Ngoni clans and called 'Chewa' if they have not had their ears pierced, and they beg their mothers to take them to the 'doctor' to be 'made Ngoni'.

10: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949) 1959
FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

In all the diagrams ego is shown as male. There is no difference in the way these terms are used when ego is a woman, except that she calls her spouse *husband* and not *wife*. There is no consensus as to what great-grandparents should be called. Sometimes *father* 601 [183]

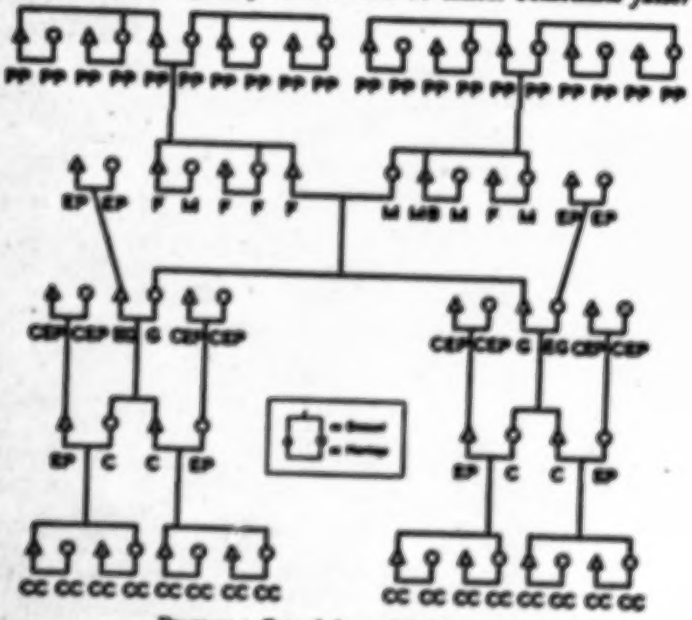

DIAGRAM 5. Extended use of kinship terms

or *mother* is used, according to sex, while others use *grandparent*. Similarly, great-grandchildren are sometimes called *child*, sometimes *grandchild*.

Exogamy and Descent-names

A man may not marry anyone whom he calls *mother*, *father*, *mother's* 582 *brother*, *child*, *affine*, *child's parent-in-law*, and, except for his 835 *cross-cousins*, *sibling*. Marriage with his brother's wife's sister, whom 601 he calls *sibling-in-law*, is allowed, but is thought to be not very satisfactory. As we have seen, these terms can be applied widely, with no theoretical limit to the extent of application. Little interest is shown, however, in tracing genealogical relationships accurately, and the sex and age of the relative referred to may affect the term used. If a